Warning against innovations is one of the fundamental principles of the Sunnah

Mohammed Saeed Raslan

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من أصول السُنة التحذير من البدع

Author

Muhammad Saeed Raslan

Translated by

Omar bin Ahmed Tohamy

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Translator introduction

All praise is due to Allah; we praise Him and seek His forgiveness.

We seek refuge in Allah from the evils of our souls and the wickedness of our deeds.

He, whom Allah guides, none can misguide him, and he whom He misguides, none can guide him.

I bear witness there is no deity worthy of worship in truth except Allah, alone, without partner.

His is the dominion and His is the praise.

He gives life and causes death, and He is over all things competent. Now then:

I have translated the book before you, entitled (**Warning against innovations is one of the fundamental principles of the Sunnah**) by (**Mohamed Saeed Raslan**) because of the many benefits and advantages it contains for the Muslim.

This translation is my own effort. If I do well, it is from Allah and His guidance to me, and if I make a mistake, it is from myself and from Satan.

I ask Allah to make this work of mine purely for Him and to spread the word of truth throughout the entire earth and to teach Muslims who do not speak Arabic their religion that Allah has chosen for them.

The one in need of his Lord's forgiveness: **Omar bin Ahmed Tohamy**.

First sermon

All praise is due to Allah. We praise Him, seek His help, and ask for His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil within ourselves and from the evil of our deeds. Whomever Allah guides, none can lead astray, and whomever He leads astray, none can guide. I bear witness there is no deity worthy of worship in truth except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him.

Now then:

The truest of speech is the Book of Allah, the best of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, and the worst of matters are those that are newly invented. Every newly invented matter is an innovation, every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance leads to Hellfire.

Now then:

The great religion of Islam is built upon two foundations: establishing the fundamentals and warning.

Shaykh al-Islam, may Allah have mercy on him, said[1]: **"The essence of the religion of Islam rests on two principles: that none should be worshipped except Allah, and that Allah should only be worshipped according to what He has prescribed; Allah should not be worshipped through innovations."**

Therefore, it is essential to dedicate one's monotheism solely to the All-Powerful, the Praiseworthy, and it is essential to follow the infallible Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, without any deviation. The religion of the Messengers is based on negation and affirmation. A religion is not considered a religion, nor is it accepted by Allah Almighty, unless both of these conditions are met.

This is the implication of the testimony that “La illah ila Allah”: to disbelieve in every deity other than Allah. It is not sufficient for a person to acknowledge that Allah blessed and Exalted is He, is the only one worthy of worship, without disbelieving in every deity other than Allah Almighty.

Likewise, in following the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, affirmation alone is not sufficient; rather, negation is also necessary. Thus, it is essential to disavow innovations and innovators.[2]

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[1] **Collection of Fatwas (19/173)**

[2] **What was mentioned above from the sermon (Foundation and Warning) - Friday, 1st of Rajab 1432 AH, corresponding to 3-6-2011 AD.**

One of the fundamental principles of the Sunnah is warning against innovations in religion.

O servants of Allah! Among the fundamental principles of the Sunnah is abandoning innovations. Imam Ahmad, may Allah have mercy on him, said: **“The fundamental principles of the Sunnah with us are: adhering to what the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, were upon, following their example, and abandoning innovations, for every innovation is misguidance.”**[3]

Abandoning innovations is based on the Almighty’s statement:

﴿اتَّبِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ﴾

"Follow, [O mankind], what has been revealed to you from your Lord and do not follow other than Him any allies."[Al-Araf: 3]

And on the Prophet’s saying, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: **“Beware of newly invented matters, for every newly invented matter is an innovation.”**[4]

And on his saying, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: **“Whoever introduces into this matter of ours something that is not part of it, it is rejected.”** This hadith is agreed upon as authentic.

Ibn Mas’ud, may Allah be pleased with him, said:[5] **“Beware of innovation, extremism, and going to extremes. Adhere to the old ways.”** This was narrated by Ad-Darimi and Al-Bayhaqi in “Al-Madkhal” with a sound chain of narration.

On the authority of Ibn al-Musayyab may Allah have mercy on him[6]: **“He saw a man praying more than two rak'ahs after dawn, prolonging the bowing in them. He forbade him from doing so, and the man said to him, ‘O Abu Muhammad! Will Allah punish me for praying?!’ He replied, ‘No, but He will punish you for transgressing the Sunnah.’”** Narrated by al-Bayhaqi and authenticated by al-Albani.

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[3] His statement, “Every innovation is misguidance,” is part of a hadith narrated by Muslim (867).
[4] It was narrated by Abu Dawud (4607) and Ahmad (17185) and authenticated by Al-Albani in “Sahih Sunan Abi Dawud” (4607).
[5] It was narrated by Abd al-Razzaq (20465), al-Darimi (144)(145), and al-Bayhaqi in al-Madkhal (388) with a sound chain of transmission.
[6] It was narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in “Al-Kubra” (413) and authenticated by Al-Albani in “Al-Irwa’” (2/236).

Imam al-Hasan ibn Ali al-Barbahari may Allah have mercy on him said[7]: **"Beware of minor innovations, for minor innovations grow until they become major ones. So, may Allah have mercy on you, consider carefully the words of everyone you hear from the people of your time, especially. Do not rush into anything until you ask and see: Has any of the Companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) or any of the scholars spoken about it? If you find a trace of it from them, then adhere to it and do not deviate from it for anything, nor choose anything over it, lest you fall into Hellfire."**

This advice from Imam al-Barbahari may Allah have mercy on him is very valuable advice. If people were to heed it, Allah would protect them from deviation and misguidance at the hands of the instigators of discord.

Imam Malik, may Allah have mercy on him, the Imam of Medina, said[8]: **"Whoever introduces something into this nation that was not practiced by its predecessors has claimed that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, betrayed the message, because Allah Almighty says,**

﴿الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا﴾

"This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion." [Al-Maidah: 3]

Therefore, what was not part of the religion then cannot be part of the religion now."

Imam Malik, may Allah have mercy on him, was asked by a man, "O Abu Abdullah! From where should I enter into the state of ihram?"

He replied, "From Dhul-Hulayfah," the miqat (designated place for assuming ihram) for the people of Medina, from where the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, entered into ihram. He said, "I want to enter the mosque from the direction of the grave." Malik replied, "Do not do that, for I fear you will fall into fitnah[9]." He said, "What fitnah is there in this?! It is merely a few extra miles." Malik said, "What fitnah is greater than thinking you have attained a virtue that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) did not attain?! I heard Allah say,

﴿فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَن تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ﴾

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[7] **"Explanation of the Sunnah" p. 23**

[8] **"Al-I'tisam" (1/66)**

[9] **Fitna is an Islamic term with multiple meanings, including trials and tribulations (such as those related to wealth, knowledge, and power), temptation and deviation from religion (the temptation of women), falling into evil, and worldly trials in general (such as conflict and turmoil).**
At its core, fitna refers to a trial or test that a person undergoes to reveal their sincerity or faith.

“So let those beware who dissent from the Prophet's order, lest fitnah strike them or a painful punishment.” [An-Nur: 63]

” This was narrated by Abu Nu’aym in “Al-Hilya” and Ibn Batta in “Al-Ibana” with a sound chain of narration.

O servants of Allah! Transgressing the Sunnah is a present misfortune in this world and a punishment reserved for the Hereafter.

The meaning of innovation (bid'ah)

Its linguistic origin is the act of inventing something without a prior example.

As for the technical definition of innovation (bid'ah), it is a newly invented method in religion, something introduced contrary to the truth received from the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him.

The evidence from the Quran, Sunnah, and reason all converge in condemning and discouraging innovations.

Condemnation of innovations in the Qur'an and Sunnah

Among the verses of the Holy Quran condemning innovations in religion is the following:

﴿وَأَنَّ هَـٰذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ ۖ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَن سَبِيلِهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ﴾

"And, [moreover], this is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way. This has He instructed you that you may become righteous."[Al-Anam: 153]

The straight path is the path of Allah, to which He has called, and it is the Sunnah.

The other paths are the paths of the people of innovation.

And His saying, may He be exalted,

﴿فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَن تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ﴾

“So let those beware who dissent from the Prophet's order, lest fitnah strike them or a painful punishment.” [An-Nur: 63]

“Lest fitnah strike them,” means that a fitnah may befall their hearts, such as disbelief, hypocrisy, or innovation.

There are numerous verses commanding the following of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and adherence to his way. Within this command to follow, there is a prohibition against innovation and a condemnation of it.

Among those verses is the Almighty's saying:

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَن يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ ۗ وَمَن يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُّبِينًا﴾

"It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should [thereafter] have any choice about their affair. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly strayed into clear error."[Al-Ahzab: 36]

And the Almighty's saying:

﴿وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانتَهُوا ۚ﴾

“And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from.”[Al-Hashr: 7]

Among the hadiths that condemn innovation, prohibit it, and command and encourage adherence to the Sunnah are the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): **“Whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not of me.”**[10] (Agreed upon as authentic)

And the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him):

“Adhere to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. Cling to it firmly and beware of newly invented matters, for every newly invented matter is an innovation, and every innovation is misguidance.” (Narrated by Ahmad and Abu Dawud, and it is an authentic hadith.)

And among the hadiths are the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him):

“Whoever introduces into this matter of ours anything that is not part of it, it is rejected.” (Agreed upon as authentic)

And the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): **“Indeed, Allah has withheld repentance from every innovator.”** (Narrated by al-Tabarani and authenticated by al-Albani)

[10] **Narrated by Al-Bukhari (5063) and Muslim (1401)**

From the sayings of the Salaf in condemning innovations

Among the sayings that condemn and discourage innovations in religion are:

The saying of Ibn Mas'ud[11]: **"Follow and do not innovate, for you have been spared all misguidance."**

And among the sayings: The saying of Sufyan al-Thawri[12]: **"Innovation is more beloved to Satan than sin. One can repent from sin, but one cannot repent from innovation."**

And among the sayings: The saying of al-Shafi'i, may Allah have mercy on him[13]: **"For a servant to meet Allah with every sin except associating partners with Him is better than meeting Him with any of the innovations."**

[11] It was narrated by Waki' in "Al-Zuhd" (315) and by Ahmad in "Al-Zuhd" (896).
[12] It was narrated by Al-Lalaka'i in "Sharh Usul al-I'tiqad" (238).
[13] Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in "Al-Kubra" (10/206)

Evidence from reason for condemning innovations

As for the rational proofs for condemning innovations, they are numerous, including:

First: The innovator is an interloper in the pure Sharia, for the innovator's essence, whether expressed through his words or actions, is that the Sharia is incomplete and that some aspects remain that must or should be addressed!

Second: The innovator is defiant and opposed to the Sharia, for the Lawgiver has specified the needs of the servant and designated particular paths for fulfilling them in specific ways. The innovator rejects all of this, claiming that there are other paths. Perhaps it is understood from the innovator's assertion of these paths that he knows something the Lawgiver did not know!

Third: Among the rational proofs that condemn innovations and their proponents is that the innovator places himself on par with the Sharia, legislating alongside the Lawgiver and opening the door to disagreement.

Fourth: The innovator follows his desires, for if reason is not aligned with the Sharia, nothing remains but desire and whim. Allah Almighty says:

﴿يَا دَاوُودُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ﴾

“[We said], "O David, indeed We have made you a successor upon the earth, so judge between the people in truth and do not follow [your own] desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of Allah."” [Saad: 26]

thus limiting judgment to two options, with no third: truth and desire. The Sharia does not allow a third path; one must either follow guidance or follow one's desires!

Fifth: The innovator is oblivious to the fact that reason alone cannot determine one's own interests without divine revelation.

May Allah’s peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and all his companions.

The second sermon

All praise is due to Allah alone, and peace and blessings be upon the one after whom there is no prophet.

Now then:

O servants of Allah, all innovations are misguidance and deviation, and misfortune befalls the innovator in this life and the hereafter. The misfortune of innovations manifests in several ways:

The first way: No deed is accepted with an innovation.

For example, the innovation of the Qadariyyah, concerning which Abdullah ibn Umar may Allah be pleased with them both said: **“If you meet those people—meaning the Qadariyyah—tell them that I am innocent of them and they are innocent of me.”**[14]

And as in the hadith of the Kharijites, in which the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: **“They pass through the religion as an arrow passes through its target.”**[15] This hadith is agreed upon as authentic.

Every innovator is to be feared for the same reason mentioned. The fact that no deed is accepted from an innovator either means that it is not accepted at all, or it means that only those deeds in which he has innovated are not accepted, while those in which he has not innovated are not.

The second aspect of the evil of innovation (bid'ah) is that the innovator is cursed by Islamic law. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said—mentioning Medina—**"Whoever introduces an innovation in it, upon him is the curse of Allah, the angels, and all of mankind."**[16] This hadith is agreed upon as authentic.

The third aspect is that showing respect to the innovator is aiding in the destruction of Islam, because going to the innovator and showing him respect is an act of glorifying him because of his innovation.

The fourth aspect of the evil of innovation is that innovations undermine the established Sunnah (Prophetic traditions) that they oppose, because when falsehood is practiced, it necessitates abandoning the truth. On the authority of Ibn Abbas may Allah be pleased with

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[14] **Narrated by Muslim (8)**
[15] **Narrated by Al-Bukhari (6930) and Muslim (1066)**
[16] **Narrated by Al-Bukhari (1870) and Muslim (1370)**

him, he said[17]: **“No year passes for the people except that they introduce an innovation and abandon a Sunnah, until innovations become widespread and Sunnahs die out.”**

The fifth aspect of the ill effects of innovation is that introducing innovations into the religion divides the Muslim community and tears apart its unity. Allah Almighty says:

﴿وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَن سَبِيلِهِۦ﴾

“do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way.”[Al-Anam: 153]

Among the ill effects of innovation is that the innovator bears the burden of his innovation and the burden of those who follow it until the Day of Resurrection. He only increases in distance from Allah and will not drink from the Cistern (of Paradise). The innovator is deprived of divine guidance and is left to his own devices.

Another aspect of the ill effects of innovation is that the innovator is afflicted with humiliation in this world and Allah Almighty’s wrath. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: **“And humiliation and disgrace have been decreed for whoever disobeys my command.”**[18]

Another aspect of the ill effects of innovation is that the innovator is feared to have a bad end, God forbid, because the innovator is undoubtedly committing a sin and disobeying Allah. And whoever dies persisting in disobedience is to be feared.

These are some of the colors of misfortune, reprehensible meanings, and forbidden descriptions that reveal innovations and include their adherents.

[17] **It was narrated by Ibn Waddah in “Al-Bida’” (95)(96) and Ibn Battah in “Al-Ibanah” (11)(225).**
[18] **It was narrated by Abu Dawud (4031) and authenticated by Al-Albani in “Al-Irwa’” (1269).**

The consensus of the early Muslims on condemning innovations and their proponents

O servants of Allah! The Companions, the Successors, and those who followed them in righteousness unanimously condemned innovations in religion, deeming them reprehensible and obligatory to avoid them and anyone associated with them.

Their lack of hesitation in this regard constitutes, by inductive reasoning, a firmly established consensus that all innovations are falsehoods.

Those who introduce innovations prioritize their desires over Islamic law, hence they are called the people of desires.

Every innovator is blameworthy and sinful. Undoubtedly, the innovator contradicts the implications of the testimony that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

This testimony necessitates believing in what he (peace and blessings be upon him) conveyed, obeying his commands, refraining from what he prohibited, and worshipping Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, only according to what He has prescribed.

I ask Allah to unite the Muslims, to unite their hearts upon the true belief, their bodies upon correct worship, and their direction upon the path of Prophethood. He is All-Powerful over everything.

May Allah’s peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and all his Companions.